conditions of loans by the neighbouring friendly countries of Asia and Africa ? Are any special concessions being given to some countries in order to strengthen our friendship with them or in consideration of the particular circumstances obtaining there

SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR : We have trade relations with all neighbouring countries and loan is advanced to them after taking into account all aspects. So far as the question of repayment of loan is concerned we are receiving timely and regular payments from Sri Lanka, Bangaladesh, Mauritius, Ghana, Zambia and some other countries. But there are some other countries like Vietnam, Tanzania Zimbabwe, Uganda who have some difficulties in repayment as per our terms and conditions. In these cases, Government of India has rescheduled the repayment and allowed them extra time enabling them to repay the loan in easy instalments. The Government is also exploring the possibilities of importing such items from these countries which are needed here so as to make the repayment of loan easy. The Government is making efforts in this direction

SHRI HARI KISHORE SINGH : I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether talks are going on with Nepal which is our next door neighbour in the matter of power genearitons ? If so, what is the progress in the matter and what would be the conditions of repayment of loan ?

SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR : Nepal is our neighbouring country and our relation with them are very close. From time to time, we have been holding talks with them in connection with exchange of rupee and a number of projects. Our Ministry of External Affairs is holding talks with neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh on such matters. Though the Ministry of Finance does not come into picture directly, yet we shall try to make available the details in respect of any specific projects if the hon. Member so desires.

[English]

MAINTENANCE OF NATIONAL HIGHWAY NO. 44

*269. SHRI PETER G. MARBANIANG : Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government of Meghalaya has requested the Union Government to hand over the running and maintenance of National Highway No. 44 from Jowai to Rotacherra (Badarpur) to the State's PWD; and

(b) if so the reaction of the Union Government thereto ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The State Government has been informed that it is essential that the road, in view of its operational importance, continues to remain with the Border Roads Organisation for development and maintenance.

SHRI PETER G. MARBANIANG: Sir, National Highway No. 44 runs from Shillong up to Rotacherra on the border of Assam. Now one part of the Highway from Shillong up to Jowai, roughly about 100 kms. is owned and maintained by State PWD. The other part of the Highway from Jowai to Rotacherra is being maintained by GRET, Border Roads Organisation. We find that GREP is not maintaining the road properly and there have been complaints again and again from the State Government and also from the different organisations using the Highway that the maintenance is very poor.

This National Highway has also got two bypasses, one from Shillong to Sohryngkham and another one from Jowai to Nongbah. Now the local people in Jowai hills are very much against running of this road and maintenance of this road by GREP.

The hon. Minister has said about the operational importance. May I know what

are the obvious criteria of operational importance which he has emphasised?

SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR : As the hon. House is aware, the Border Roads Organisation constructs and improves border roads of operational importance with defence-oriented funds supported in some cases by funds made available by the Ministry of Surface Transport.

In the case of National Highway No. 44, it is correct that a certain portion of this Highway has been under the control of the Meghalaya PWD from the very beginning because in 1971 when the Border Roads Organisation took control of this National Highway for operational reasons in connection with the Bangladesh war, this particular portion was left out and it was never acquired by the Border Roads Organisation.

As far as the rest of the portion of this National Highway is concerned, there are several demands from the Government of Meghalaya as also from the Governments of Assam and Tripura that the portions of this highway which run through this particular State be handed over to the respective PWD. But the Ministry of Defence, in consultation with the Army Headquarters has come to the conclusion that this particular highway should remain under the control of the Border Roads Organisation for operational reasons. This is the conclusive opinion of our armed forces.

As regards maintenance, this particular Highway has been maintained at the highest possible standard & Curve-E even higher than the standard stipulated for the National Highway, system what is known as CBR value, accordingly to which the quality of maintenance and quality of construction is measured is the highest. It conforms to the highest specifications of roads in this category there has also been great progress in the construction and maintenance of NH. 44 by virtue of the Border Roads Organisation being in-charge of this National Highway.

Three phases of expansion have already been completed. In the first phase, we spent something like Rs. 23.5 crores. In the second phase, we spent Rs. 32 crores and the third phase of expansion is under implementation. We have already spent Rs. 67 crores.

Therefore, there is no reason for the hon. Member to worry about the quality of maintenance of this road and, in any case, it is not possible at this point of time to hand over the roads to the concerned State Governments because of the conclusively established operational reasons of the Defence forces.

SHRI PETER G. MARBANIANG : I want to know the criterion on which this portion of the road is given its operational importance from those days till today. In what way is it important from the defence point of view? The road is far away from the border. It is nowhere near the border except a few portions of it, especially from Jowai to Rotacherra which is running in the middle of Meghalaya. The border is miles away. Till today, in spite of the demands of the State Government, this highway is still held by the GREF.

MR. SPEAKER : You want to know the criterion as to why it is given operational importance.

SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR : It will not be in the public interest to explain all the parameters by which the need for the broadway under the control of the Border Roads Organisation for operational reasons is established. I cannot give all the details except to say that these parameters are different from the parameters by which the roads are judged by the State Government. These roads were operationally very important during the Bengladesh operation.

It is a border road. In strategic terms, the Defence Forces have not only to think of moving our forces faster but they also have to think of stopping the enemy from coming inside. So, there are various load factors for the bridges etc. there are various other parameters. There is a different type of planning which is involved. I shall confine my remarks to that. I cannot give more details. (*Interruptions*)

SHRI PETER G. MARBANIANG : Sir, I would like to draw the attention of the hon. Minister to the fact that the portion of the road which is owned and maintained by the GREF has become an example of wasteful expenditure of the Government through the contributions of the people of Jainthia Hills where one spade is held by three people. The road is being maintained by them there very shabbily and very badly. I would like to know from the hon. Minister the expenditure involved in this regard. Further, the GREF, when they take a new alignment of the road, do not even bother to go into the land system of the area. They just go and acquire the land without informing the District Magistrate of the area and without informing the owners of the land. They have created havoc in the Jainthia Hills. I would request the hon. Minister that he should reconsider handing over the road to the State PWD.

MR. SPEAKER : The question is : Is the Government going to reconsider it? He turned the suggestion into a question.

(Interruptions)

SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR : Sir, it is a matter of opinion whether the construction and maintenance of the border roads by the State Government or by the Army is more efficient or not. We beg to differ from the hon. Member. As far as the Border Roads Organisation is concerned, all works are executed departmentally. We have a large work force on our pay-rolls. There are no contractors and very strict stipulations are enforced by the Army with reference to every single parameter in road construction. So, I beg to differ from the hon. Member as regards the quality of work which, he said, will suffer if it is handled by the GREF. The Government does't propose to reconsider its decision as of now.

SHRI BHUWAN CHANDRA KHANDURI : Sir, the fact is that a portion of this road is still with the State PWD. The hon. Minister has given the reason of security and operational requirements for keeping the main portion of the road with GREF. Is the operational requirement and national security not applicable to that portion of the road which is still with the State PWD ? What has the Government done to take over that portion of the road ? Let him please explain.

SHRI S. KRISHAN KUMAR : I have already explained in the beginning that this road was taken over by the Border Roads Organisation and a particular portion was left out and allowed to be maintained by the Government of Meghayala because that portion is in the plains. The hilly portions and the more strategic areas start after this portion and that particular portion was maintained well by the Meghalaya Government. That particular portion, the Army did not consider necessary to take over in 1971. That is why it remains with the Meghalaya Government.

SHRI JITENDRA NATH DAS : Sir, perhaps, the hon. Minister may be aware that the people of our country who are in the border area bordering with Bangladesh are being severely tortured by the security forces.

MR. SPEAKER : This is a different issue. He may not have the information with him.

COMPENSATION FOR DAMAGE TO STATE ROADS

*270 SHRI DIGVIJAYA SINGH : Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state :

(a) whether the traffic on National Highway No. 3 was diverted to State roads because of damage to Ghorapachar bridge in Rajgarh district, Madhya Pradesh during the last rainy season;

(b) whether, because of this diversion, the heavy traffic damaged the State roads;

(c) whether the Government of Madhya pradesh has demanded any compensation from the Union Government for the damage to the State roads;

(d) if so, the amount of compensation demanded by the State Government; and

(e) the reaction of the Union Government thereto?